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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE AND EUR:A/S FRIED

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TAGS: KCFE PREF PARM NATO RS BE

SUBJECT: BELGIUM NOTIFIED OF FRIED-ANTONOV MEETING ON CFE

REF: STATE 130577

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Richard Eason, reason 1.4(b)
) and (d).

¶1. (C) On December 15, Poloff delivered reftel notification of the planned Fried-Antonov meeting in Geneva on December 17 to Francois De Kerchove, deputy director of the Department of Security Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. De Kerchove said that the news of the Fried-Antonov meeting was welcome news to the Belgian government. He said that such bilateral meetings help to make general progress on CFE, which is needed because of the current state of paralysis of the CFE. He said the GOB recognizes Russian proposals for a new security pact in Europe as an effort to "sink the fish" by creating a broad field for discussion. For Belgium, he said, it is better to reaffirm the commitment to CFE than to let CFE drop. Any other way of thinking is dangerous, he added. He believes that Russian attitudes right now are influenced by deep financial and economic problems that have recently developed in Russia, and are calculated to distract the population from those problems. De Kerchove deemed the Russian proposals vague and offering only broad principles to build upon. He sees it as necessary to engage the Russians on their ideas, but to ensure they understand that the NATO allies have red lines that cannot be crossed. These red lines, he said, were defined by French President Sarkozy in an October speech at Evian. The bottom line is that we have to "preserve the *acquis*", which includes transatlantic solidarity, the European Security and Defense Policy, CFE and OSC.

¶2. (C) De Kerchove said that the GOB sees proposals to use an OSCE summit to discuss the Russian principles as a problem. Although Sarkozy has recognized such a summit as a good format, it seems less than feasible in 2009, he said. In particular, the Kazakh presidency at the OSCE raises a major question mark. The matter will need to be discussed at the next NATO summit in Strasbourg, he concluded.

FOX

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